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Louise Philips, Marianne Kristiansen, Marja Vehviläinen and Ewa Gunnarsson, *Knowledge and power in collaborative research: A reflexive approach*. Routledge: London, 2013.

Reviewed by: Ally R Memon, Kingston University, UK

*Knowledge and Power in Collaborative Research* makes for indulgent reading that will interest a wide audience. It invites readers to gain an insight into the power of collaborative research and presents a range of strategies to tackle the complexities associated with the co-production of knowledge and the challenges of engaging with collaborative research. This book offers a substantial discussion on ethical, epistemological and methodical issues using in-depth case analyses of collaborative knowledge production.

This book promotes the collaborative knowledge production agenda and is a result of great initiative taken by a substantial network of academics who have encouraged theoretical and empirical debates to showcase the potential of collaborative research. This book is very diverse in terms of the content it covers and the range of cases that are presented. The message of this book is a clear and much needed one: that dialogue in its various and processual forms is critical for new knowledge that must be co-produced collaboratively. For this, this book presents various strategies for reflexively understanding collaborative research and takes on a critical lens to examine issues. The belief in the transformative power of collaborative research resonates throughout this text.

In its various ways, this book showcases collaborative forms of knowledge production and communication and develops ranging perspectives for why these are important. It demonstrates to the reader how dialogue, empowerment and participation create collaborative enterprises where individuals, groups and networks of research and practice are encouraged to produce interdisciplinary and practice-relevant knowledge. Elements of this book provide an insight into how collaborative research efforts can enable individuals to perform effectively in a knowledge-based economy. This book manages to remain pragmatic about the practical challenges and paradoxes faced when attempting to engage with collaborative research. This is demonstrated through the coverage of issues such as tackling the tensions of dialogue and participation, dealing with dilemmas in pragmatic action research and tensions between diffusion and dialogue. This is a strong point of this book's content since it addresses the realities and contradictions of doing collaborative research and refrains from promoting collaborative research as a utopian concept. Hence, there is a pluralist tone present throughout this book in terms of the different ways that co-production can be understood and enacted. This is largely visible across the chapters which constitute intellectual and empirical arguments surrounding collaborative research. This book remains true to the principle that collaboration is highly complex and marred by tensions.

This book advocates a dialogic approach to knowledge production and promotes a host of reflexive research strategies with the humanist 'self' kept central throughout. To the reader, such an approach feels like one that diligently tries to deal with, rather than shy away from, the complexities arising from the dualities of society and its subjects. The various chapters and cases presented build a strong case for engaging with reflexive analysis, which for the reader address a host of ontological and methodological concerns.

The structure of this book which is divided into three parts flows well and creates linkage. Part 1 deals with reflexive analyses of how participation and dialogue are performed in practices of

collaborative knowledge production and communication. Here, what is particularly interesting is the grappling with the consequences of different identities that come into play in research relationships when dialogue and communication in collaboration are attempted. Also fascinating is the content related to the role of intermediaries in collaborative knowledge production and communication, which is eloquently demonstrated to the reader using a case of institutional ethnography in a Finnish non-governmental organisation (NGO). Part 2 of this book deals with fundamental questions of ethics and raises debates around involvement of actors and the self in collaborative research which researchers will be able to strongly associate with. Some fascinating insights and innovative conceptualising constitute this part of this book, for example, in the case of applying ethical principles derived from Bakhtin's theory to analyse researcher-participant relationships in animated (virtual environment) film-making projects. Having read the first two parts of this book, part 3 addresses the epistemological questions that arise in relation to the co-production of knowledge and the tensions and dilemmas of collaborative research engagement.

The chapters in this book dwell into the multifaceted nature of collaboration and its complexity and blurriness, highlighting the key fact that there are no definitive answers to achieve. Rather, what is demonstrated is that collaborative research is subject to the dialogic approach as a suitable way forward in its interpretation and handling of participation without any such thing as a 'best fit'. Taking up a 'critical, reflexive' approach, this book tries to deal with the inherent problems of doing collaborative research and attempts to contribute to the improvement of collaborative research practices. Focal to the topic are discourses of power and politics and the influence of technology on collaborative research attempts which have been directly addressed. Philosophical underpinnings of the topic are also dealt with since debates on power and knowledge open up discussion around how reality can be understood and how organising can be attempted. The reader further appreciates this text because it has bravely attempted to address the fundamental conflict between different knowledge forms and knowledge interests which researchers and research communities are commonly faced with. Therefore, academics and practitioners alike will find the arguments and suggestions in this book realistic and will appreciate the issues that have been tackled given modern-day pressures to embark in collaborative research projects.

This book offers variety in relation to how researchers approach and engage with the co-production of knowledge at different stages of the research process. Through the cases presented, the reader is able to appreciate the variability of researcher-participant relations that are enacted differently based on context. The case examples essentially help the reader to understand and accustom themselves with the various dialogues and subjectivities of the collaborative research process and the co-produced efforts of researchers. This is an important need being fulfilled in an era where research collaboration is surrounded by various policy discourses and is seen as a means of social innovation and economic growth.

This book also touches on novel concepts related to collaborative research by stirring up debates around management learning, public participation, post-structuralism and codetermination among many others. This will appeal to researchers across a range of domains such as professional education, public management and public policy. Furthermore, the cross-disciplinary ideas and arguments in this book will complement novel research paradigms such as New Public Governance (Osborne, 2010; Osborne et al., 2013) and Co-production in public services (Cottam and Leadbeater, 2004). From a critical perspective, this book also provides a theoretical and empirical platform

through which to challenge sceptics of the co-production and participative knowledge creation concepts (Fledderus et al., 2015; Simmons et al., 2012) while providing support for transitions in action learning in the 21st century (Fenwick, 2013). This goes to demonstrate the versatile application of this book in an era where organisations globally are interested in gaining advantage through integrated and collaborative approaches to learning (Pittaway and Cope, 2007). This book's timely release makes for an important scholarly contribution since we are witnessing momentum in the debate surrounding the theoretical development of knowledge co-production and an unfolding of collaborative research practices (Marcos and Denyer, 2012).

In terms of the editorial effort, this book really has brought together content and cases from various sectors ranging from health care to performing arts that demonstrate the power of collaboration as a means of learning from varied partners across different contexts. For this reason, this book will appeal to people across a range of disciplines. The approach taken in this book stems from empirical cases applied in the Nordic context and which gathers research reflections from a network of Nordic institutions. This in some ways creates limitations of perspective and applicability since the focus remains on a distinct region for enquiry and evidence gathering. The text may have benefited from inclusion of research from the European and American contexts since it would have given this attempted transdisciplinary treatment of the subject more diversity. Having said this, such a limitation does not thwart the impact that this book is able to make.

For those looking to cover theoretical ground on co-produced knowledge and are interested in engaging with collaborative research, this text will offer various examples from a range of cross-disciplinary contexts. The case studies in this book such as those of public engagement and participatory governance in Finnish Local Government and the collaborative research project of the Danish Armed Forces provide valuable insights into the processes and challenges of doing collaborative research. Further to this, a wide range of research strategies including action research, feminist research, post-structuralism and actor–network theory are presented and evaluated in the context of collaborative research, which will appeal to a wide audience.

Sound guidance is also on offer in this book where on the basis of empirical evidence, researchers can obtain useful suggestions about how to gain and benefit from the researcher–participant relationship while dealing with different knowledge interests. This book is easy to follow and the writing is fluid which makes it enjoyable to read regardless of what level or stage one operates at. Given its theoretical, empirical and methodological diversity as a text, it has plenty of value to offer to both the novice and expert researcher. It has been an interesting read that manages to successfully achieve its intended purpose of contributing to the area of collaborative research, given the range and depth of theoretical, empirical and methodological issues covered. A particular application of this book will be to enable researchers to engage with research methodologies that are different or better to what they have attempted before, with an informed knowledge of the benefits of collaborating. This makes this book a suitable title for teaching purposes also.

*Knowledge and Power in Collaborative Research* does not offer readers solutions or definitive ways of dealing with research challenges. Rather, it provides readers with new ideas and novel strategies so that they can develop reflexivity and be able to articulate their own approaches to deal with the challenges of collaborative research. With a strong narrative and a concrete evidence base, this book is one that will have an impact on those wishing to engage with effective collaborative research.

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